

SPECIAL  
SUNDAY

# HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

## SERMON STARTER



This sermon starter is part of the Human Relations Day pastor and leader kit and connects with the theme “Listening Hearts: Responding to the Prophetic Call.” It can be adapted for your context and integrated into your worship service with the other material in the kit. It is based on the lectionary reading for January 14, 2024: 1 SAMUEL 3:1-10, (11-20).

**P**lease pray with me: *Holy and gracious God, speak to us today. Your servants are listening with hearts open wide. Thank you for revealing yourself in unexpected places and times, showing us the boundless depths of your love and grace. On this Human Relations Day, we yearn to respond to your prophetic call. Help us to embrace your love fully and share your abundant grace extravagantly. Equip us to amplify stories and experiences that carry your message of love, hope and justice into the world. Amen.*

It would help if the experience between Eli, Samuel, and God was as explicit for us today, right? But instead, most of us must rely on listening with our hearts to discern where God is calling us. God's voice isn't always thunderous; it often manifests as a still, small whisper, discernible only to the hearts attuned to divine messaging. We might hear that whisper in this temple, but it should also guide our words and actions in workplaces, schools, communities, and homes. How often do we watch the news or reflect on the challenges in our own community and sense God nudging us to do something?

**(Lift up some examples of current events or community concerns.)**

We remember how Martin Luther King, Jr. exemplified courage to respond to God's voice, even when the path ahead was risky. Like Samuel, King showed us that our response to God's call can be a powerful force for transformation throughout our society.

**(Lift up examples of transformational ministry happening through your church and/or community.)**

Our gifts through the Human Relations Day offering pour out into the world, leading people out of challenging situations and into a life of abundant relationship with others and with God.

I was moved to learn about a woman who struggles with addiction, who heard God calling her through the Hoover Treatment Center. Not only did she find success in recovery, but she also found Jesus. She now works with women who have exited the in-patient program to prevent relapse and nurture spiritual growth as an avenue for recovery.

When you listen with your heart, you hear God calling you by name, seeking a deeper relationship. You have the opportunity to be like Eli, creating an environment of trust and wisdom to help others orient themselves to God's voice. You have the opportunity to be like Samuel, to continue to respond even when you aren't sure what is being asked of you.

And thanks be to God's grace, wherever you are from, whatever your circumstance, whatever your age, you are invited to respond, “Speak, God, for your servant is listening.”

In these days, the vision of God seems to be rare, but it is not absent. God's presence is with us continually in this world.

If you let go, if you listen, you will hear God speak to you.  
*How will you respond?*



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